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THE PONY EXPRESS.

Carrying the Mails Over the Plains in the Fifties.

"The first express ever run across the plains was started by a man named Butterfield in 1858," said Alexander Benham, of Montana, the manager of the first overland express. "It started at Little Rock, Ark., and followed a southern route through Kansas, New Mexico, Arizona, and then to Los Angeles, Cal. About two years later, in 1860, our company was formed for the purpose of carrying the mails to the Pacific coast. It was known as the Central Overland, California and Pike's Peak Express company. William H. Russell, Alexander Majors and a man named Wadell formed the company, and the contracts with the government for carrying mails were made out in their names. I was chosen manager, and had my office in Denver."

"The southern route run by Butterfield did not have as much prominence as ours, which for years was known as the 'pony express' route. It started in at St. Joseph, Mo., running through Nebraska to Fort Kearney, to Fort Laramie, Wyo., thence to Denver, to Salt Lake City, to Placerville, Nev., and to Sacramento, Cal. The whole trip, extending half across the continent, was made in 17 days, when no accident befell, and accidents were not so numerous as some people have imagined. From St. Joseph to Denver the trip took seven days, and from Denver to Sacramento was a journey of ten days. That was, of course, by the regular stage route, and little time was lost in making it."

"To accommodate our business we had about 150 coaches, most of which were kept running all the time. To haul them we had 1,500 horses scattered along the route from St. Joseph to Sacramento. In addition we had 6,000 or 7,000 head of cattle, which were used in hauling heavy freight and transporting feed for the horses and provisions for our men. You can see that the business was not by any means a small one and it continued to grow as long as there was any use for such means of transportation. This was until the completion of the Union Pacific railway to California in 1870. Then overland traffic and mail service could be managed to better purpose by the railroad, and our pony express went out of existence. But up to that time from the day that the route was first opened in 1860 its business had steadily increased. Even the building of the railroad assisted us, for our line was the best adapted for carrying to Western stations employes and provisions."

The Gallas Tribes.

King Menelek, or rather Negus Menelek, of Abyssinia, in killing 7,000 and capturing 15,000 of the Gallas tribe, has evened up an old score of twenty-six years' standing. The story is one of which but very few people are aware. When Lord Napier, then Sir Robert, landed with the Indian expedition force at Massowah to invade Abyssinia, his chief of the intelligence department was a Major Tweedie, an officer whose life had been saved in the mutiny by a native trooper, Meer Akbar Ali. He had retained Akbar Ali afterward and had once sent him for a three years' trip to Arabia to buy race horses, at a time when Arabs were not allowed to be exported. Akbar Ali in that time became a perfect scholar in Arabic. He had also visited Abyssinia and learned the customs of the country. He thus was an exceedingly valuable assistant to Major Tweedie's department. Sir Robert Napier was afraid that on his approaching the capital, Magdala, King Theodore would break for the interior of Africa, thus causing a protracted war. Learning that the Gallas tribes—who lay between Abyssinia and the heart of the Upper Nile region—were not over fond of Theodore, he sent Akbar Ali alone to get through the country, subdivide and rouse the Gallas and make sure that Theodore's retreat was thus cut off. This was done in the most timely way and as the British army arrived at Magdala the Negus saw that there was no escape for him. The city was taken and he committed suicide. His son, King John, was educated at Oxford. King Menelek, of Shoa, obtained the crown in 1889, and has at last had it out with his great uncle's betrayers.

A Curious Beetle.

A small beetle called sitaris, instead of leaving its egg as a mere grub in the ordinary fashion, and subsequently changing into the adult condition, is hatched in some bee's nest and possesses six legs and two long antennae. It attaches itself to a drone bee, and when the drones sally forth with the queen it passes to the latter.

When the queen lays her eggs it springs upon one and becomes incased with it in the wax cell wherein the egg has been laid. There it first devours the egg and then transforms itself into a grub and feeds on the honey which had been provided for the young bee, and is ready to hand in the same cell. Finally, it undergoes another metamorphosis, and acquiring legs, etc., emerges as a perfect beetle.

Big and Costly Keys.

The keys to the iron gates which are placed at either end of the corridor in the City Hall where the council chambers are to be, says the Philadelphia Record, are marvels of strength and workmanship. The New York manufacturer claimed that each key cost \$16 and occupied the time of a skilled workman for a week. They are made of steel, entirely hand wrought and the designs are artistic and complicated. The locks on the gates are unusually powerful, and it is explained that the councilmen feared lest lobbyists secure an entrance to the chambers. The bolts run up and down from the floor to the ceiling, and nothing short of a dynamite charge or a battering ram could induce them to give way.

One-eighth of the population of Great Britain is now in London.